

Why Strategies Fail

Strategies rarely fail because the vision was wrong — they fail because execution never took root. The biggest pitfalls are strategies that turn into shelfware, overstated differentiators that erode credibility, and an overreliance on flawed data that masks reality. When this happens, leaders lose momentum, employees disengage, and customers see no tangible change

A strategy is only as strong as the operating rhythm that brings it to life.

What to Watch in the First 90 Days

The first 90 days after strategy definition make or break success. This is where organizations prove whether they can move from concept to execution. Early wins establish credibility, a clear governance rhythm creates accountability, and embedding metrics ensures risks don't get ignored. Leaders who fail to act decisively in this window often find their strategies drifting into irrelevance.

Momentum is a choice — build it in the first 90 days, or risk losing it for good.



Strategy Formulation

Purpose and Benefits **P.1**

Key Areas of Strategy Formulation **P.2**

Execution and Risks **P.2**

Building the Foundation for Sustainable Growth

Strategy formulation is the deliberate process of defining where an organization wants to go, how it will compete, and how resources will be allocated to get there. It is more than crafting vision or mission statements—it is about building an actionable blueprint that aligns leadership, drives sustainable competitive advantage, and enables disciplined execution. Without deliberate formulation, strategy often becomes reactive, responding to crises rather than shaping the future.

Purpose and Benefits

The purpose of strategy formulation is to create clarity of direction. McKinsey emphasizes that mastering the 'building blocks' of strategy requires not just defining aspirations but stress-testing assumptions, identifying differentiating activities, and committing leadership to the outcomes.

Gartner highlights that organizations who integrate strategy with capacity planning and operating model design outperform peers who treat strategy as a stand-alone exercise.

The benefits of well-structured formulation include:

- Alignment across leadership, cascading clarity throughout the organization.
- Competitive differentiation through unique capabilities and brand positioning.
- Efficient resource allocation, ensuring investments drive maximum value.
- Improved financial performance and proactive risk management.

Fewer than half of executives believe their organizations are effective at assessing their ability to execute strategy.



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Execution Discipline in Practice

Execution is where credibility is won or lost. Organizations often invest heavily in strategy design but stumble when it comes to embedding discipline into day-to-day operations. The strongest performers translate strategy into **90-day operating objectives**, set up **governance cadences** that keep leaders accountable, and use early indicators to spot risks before they become failures.

It's not about micromanaging every task — it's about creating a rhythm that ensures teams stay aligned and adaptive. The first 90 days should deliver visible progress, prove that new ways of working can take hold, and establish trust with both employees and customers.

Execution discipline turns intent into impact — without it, even the best strategy is just words on a page.



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Key Areas of Strategy Formulation

At the heart of strategy formulation are several key focus areas:

- **Vision & Purpose**
Defined in credible, inspiring terms that stretch the organization.
- **Market & Competitive Analysis**
Identifying trends, disruptors, and shifts in customer behavior.
- **Differentiating Capabilities** (X-Factor)
Unique strengths tested for sustainability and alignment.
- **Internal Realities**
Financial efficiency, cost structures, and profitability by service line.
- **Execution Priorities**
Translating strategy into initiatives, KPIs, and accountability.
- **Culture & Values**
Shared principles and behaviors that shape decision-making, foster alignment, and reinforce long-term organizational health.
- **Operating Model & Experience**
Defining how the organization is structured, how teams work with each other, and how customers experience the business — alignment between internal operations, employee engagement and customer journey.

What High-Performing Organizations Do Differently

70% of transformation efforts fail (McKinsey) — underscoring that strategy definition is only half the battle.

Execution and Risk

Execution is where strategies succeed or fail. Gartner reports that only 47% of enterprises meet their strategic objectives, largely due to weak execution disciplines. To overcome this, organizations must embed accountability, metrics, and review cadences directly into their operating rhythm.

Poorly built strategies often stall — becoming shelfware, overstating strengths, or losing momentum.

A simple 5-step model keeps strategy active:

- **Cascade strategy into Ops Objectives**
Break strategy into 90-day goals with clear owners and measures.
- **Set Governance Rhythm**
Establish steering oversight, weekly reviews, and 30/60/90 checkpoints.
- **Activate Metrics & Early Indicators**
Track KPIs and early indicators to measure progress.
- **Run Scenario & Risk Simulations**
Run pilots, scenario, and stress tests to validate and mitigate risk.
- **Adapt & Improve**
Capture lessons, update playbooks, and reallocate resources — sustaining.